United Nations E/CN.6/1999/2/Add.1

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
25 January 1999

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Forty-third session
1–12 March 1999
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: review of mainstreaming in organizations of the United Nations system

Follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Update of the synthesized report on national action plans and strategies for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–6	2
II.	Analysis of action plans and implementation strategies	7–54	2
	A. Institutional and financial arrangements	7–10	2
	B. Support from the international community	11–12	3
	C. Critical areas of concern in the plans and strategies	13–54	3

* E/CN.6/1999/1.

99-02428 (E) 180299

I. Introduction

1. At its forty-second session, in 1998, the Commission on the Status of Women considered a synthesized report (E/CN.6/1998/6) on implementation plans of Governments and the United Nations, which had been requested by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1996/6 concerning the long-term programme of work of the Commission.[1] The report was based, *inter alia*, on national action plans and other sources of information already available in the United Nations system. It contained an analysis of national action plans submitted officially to the Secretariat by 85 Member States and one observer. It examined whether plans followed the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action[2] concerning preparation, content, action defined, and resources allocated. Each set of national objectives was compared with the strategic objectives in the Platform for Action to determine trends and priorities, including regional trends and mainstreaming initiatives. The report evaluated whether Member States made policy declarations of a general nature or defined specific action, including legal action. Particular attention was given to the targets and benchmarks established under critical areas of concern in the Platform for Action and how Member States reflected them in their action plans or translated them into national targets.

2. The General Assembly, in its resolution 52/231 of 4 June 1998 on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, encouraged Governments that had not yet done so to submit their national plans of action to the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat by September 1998 as an input to the start of the review and appraisal during the forty-third session of the Commission. In a note verbale dated 2 July 1998, Governments were also encouraged to submit implementation reports if available. The Secretary-General offered the assistance of the United Nations system to Governments for the preparation of national plans of action and implementation reports.

3. The scope of the analysis contained in the present report is limited to national action plans and information on their development submitted officially to the Secretariat by 20 Member States during 1998.[3] Some of the submissions also contained information on activities already carried out.[4] Fifteen Member States submitted additional information, including final, updated or printed versions of their national action plans.[5] Four Member States that had submitted their national action plans in 1997 submitted follow-up or progress reports on the implementation of the Platform for Action.[6] One Member State submitted in addition a national plan on human rights.[7]

4. National action plans received in 1998 confirm the findings contained in the synthesized report (E/CN.6/1998/6, paras. 4–13). The majority of the plans focus on the following critical areas of concern: women in power and decision-making, violence against women, and women and health.

5. The national action plans cover all the critical areas of concern but, as with those previously analysed, they tend to reflect national priorities and limit themselves to some critical areas of concern, reflecting regional differences and preferences. In Angola's strategies for the advancement of women, for instance, the participation of women in the peace process figures as the first critical area of concern. The majority of plans contain both general policy recommendations and concrete action proposals. Only a few establish comprehensive time-bound targets and benchmarks or indicators for monitoring. Ghana, for example, in its draft plan of action, defines targets for every strategic objective and action.

6. National action plans constitute the basis for an assessment of the implementation of the Platform for Action by the year 2000 and will be useful for examining the success of policies and projects. They will further aid in the assessment process if Governments use them to report on implementation. The review and appraisal will examine how policy commitments have been converted into concrete policies followed by actions. It will examine which benchmarks have been met and which indicators have proven to be appropriate for measurement purposes. A preliminary report on this topic is contained in document E/CN.6/1999/PC/3.

II. Analysis of action plans and implementation strategies

A. Institutional and financial arrangements

7. In keeping with the results described in the synthesized report (E/CN.6/1998/6), the analysis of additional national action plans or strategies for action confirms that the Fourth World Conference on Women has had an impact at the national level. National action plans have been elaborated in many countries in collaboration with policy makers and actors from civil society.

8. The reports submitted by Belize and Saint Kitts and Nevis, for instance, focus exclusively on the establishment of a framework for gender management systems, on the creation of an enabling environment and the setting up of the necessary institutional arrangements. In Belize, the Ministry of Economic Development's Planning Unit will be the lead organization working with all agencies involved to integrate a gender-sensitive management approach into the provision of social services. Gender management systems consisting of units on gender issues, non-governmental organizations and the private sector have also been established in Kenya. They coordinate, monitor and assess progress in the advancement of women within the framework of a coordinated follow-up to and implementation of national and international instruments from a gender perspective, with the women's bureau as the catalyst.

9. In some cases, elements of the Platform for Action are integrated into national development or policy agendas. In Honduras, which does not have a national strategy, the government plan for the period 1998–2000, entitled the "New Agenda", incorporates gender mainstreaming and includes many aspects of the Beijing Platform for Action. In Kenya, the Eighth National Development Plan and the draft policy paper on gender and development articulate the need to achieve gender equity in development. Ethiopia reports that the Constitution, the National Women's Policy and the overall Rural-centred Development Programme incorporate all 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action.

10. Most action plans do not include budget proposals or indicate sources of financing for the actions indicated. Senegal's plan is one of the few exceptions since it includes a detailed budget of annual costs for the period 1997–2001, broken down by subprogrammes, activities and regions and setting a time-frame. It suggests strengthening the technical and planning capacities of the national machinery for the advancement of women and providing it with an appropriate budget and sufficient human and logistical resources. The Maldives plan recommends that all ministries review policies and programmes from a gender perspective, locate the responsibility for the implementation of the mandate at the highest possible level and establish and/or strengthen an interministerial coordination structure to carry out this mandate, monitor progress and network. In Zambia, the Ministry of Finance is to engender the budget and introduce a 10 per cent budgetary allocation for women's income-generating activities.

B. Support from the international community

11. While most plans make reference to support from the international community related to specific projects or programmes, only the Sudan lists international resources and support besides national resources for each activity. Angola's plan highlights the supportive role played by the international community, in particular the United Nations system, in the drafting and implementation process.

12. Specific projects funded by the international community include post-Beijing outreach activities in poor urban communities in Ghana funded by the United Nations Population Fund. In Zambia, the Joint United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) supports the HIV/AIDS prevention activities and the United Nations Development Programme provides credit schemes that target women at the grass-roots level. Mention is also made of bilateral assistance, such as that for educational programmes in Zambia through the British Council and the World Bank and support for the Curriculum Development Centre by the United States Agency for International Development. In Ethiopia, the World Bank has provided grants for the establishment of women's activity centres in five regions to facilitate market outlets for poor women.

C. Critical areas of concern in the plans and strategies

Women and poverty

13. Thirteen national action plans and strategies out of 20 establish policies and programmes for the eradication of poverty among women. An analysis of national action plans indicates that they follow closely the conclusions and recommendations under this critical area of concern of the Platform for Action. Five of the plans emphasize the negative impact of structural adjustment policies on women — in particular that such policies lead to an increase in the number of women in poverty. Thus several plans focus on the elaboration of gender-sensitive macroeconomic policies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty. Zambia, for instance, is implementing a Social Action Programme to cushion women from short-term impacts of structural adjustment policies. Kenya, in addition, is planning to introduce programmes that will facilitate productive employment for women migrants.

14. The economic empowerment of women is considered by Governments as a crucial element in breaking the cycle of poverty. Hence most national action plans focus on promoting employment and income-generating activities for women in both rural and urban areas and the elimination of unemployment among them. Zambia, for instance, plans to allocate 10 per cent of the budget to encouraging women's income-generating activities. Maldives is focusing on the introduction of special measures to eliminate women's unemployment, especially measures with long-term objectives. Kazakhstan is implementing programmes to support the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. Ethiopia is designing an incentive scheme for women investors.

15. Many countries indicate that they intend to improve women's access to credit. Ghana, Maldives and Zambia, for example, are introducing credit schemes for grass-roots women in both urban and rural areas. Many countries are proposing measures aimed at improving or reorganizing social security systems in order to provide allowances and benefits to various groups of women. Georgia, for instance, is planning to review existing legislation in order to strengthen social support to all groups of women. In compliance with strategic objective A.3 (Provide women with access to savings and credit mechanisms and institutions), Kazakhstan, Kenya and Zambia have proposed actions to promote gender analysis of poverty and improve data collection disaggregated by sex. In addition, many Governments are focusing on the improvement of primary health care, nutrition and primary education as a means of reducing poverty.

Education and training of women

16. In 14 out of 20 national action plans, education and training of women is considered a critical area of concern. Some plans follow closely the targets established in the Platform for Action. Zambia's objective is to increase the enrolment and retention of girls at all levels of education by 80 per cent of 1990 levels by 2001. Senegal plans to reduce drop-out rates, repetition and exclusion of girls from schooling, and reduce illiteracy by 5 per cent every year. It also envisages offering pre-school education for 50 per cent of children 2 to 6 years old. Kazakhstan will improve functional literacy in the transition period.

17. Many Governments recognize that the creation of an enabling environment is a prerequisite for equality in education. Senegal intends to educate parents and society to achieve a change in attitude. Maldives plans to create a gender-sensitive education system and develop training programmes and material for teachers and educators that raise awareness about the status, role and contribution of women and men in the family and society. Kenya's plan proposes affirmative action to promote girls' education by providing quotas for girls, providing qualified teachers and subsidizing equipment and textbooks. Ghana mentions scholarship schemes for poor girls.

18. With regard to the content of education, the removal of bias from language, textbooks and teacher attitudes remains a concern. Many highlight the important role of women teachers. In Ethiopia, the number of female teachers is expected to be 35 per cent. Croatia will increase the number of women in management positions in education. The importance of women in science and technology is also recognized. Kazakhstan will encourage women to participate in the programme of international cooperation in science and education. Kenya promotes new types of learning to fit new needs, such as conflict resolution, gender studies and research, leadership training and human rights, especially women's rights, at all levels.

Women and health

19. Women and health is a priority issue in 16 of the 20 national action plans analysed. Member States give particular attention to reproductive health and safe motherhood programmes and set specific targets. Ghana and Kenya follow the targets set in the Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. Angola's goal is to reduce maternal and infant mortality by 8 per cent by 2000 and 15 per cent by 2015. Croatia targets a reduction of the mortality rate of newborn and small children to 7 per 1,000. Senegal's plan lists a number of health programmes that contain established goals, including a 50 per cent reduction of anaemia in women in the programme to combat malnutrition by 2001.

20. With regard to women's sexual and reproductive health, national action plans address the provision of access to family planning and quality obstetric and prenatal care. Kazakhstan's plan includes safe maternity, prevention and sterility treatment. Ghana will recognize and deal with the health impact of unsafe abortions. Senegal sets a clear goal and intends to reduce women's withdrawal from contraceptive use by 50 per cent.

21. The availability of and access to health-care centres and services is of concern. In Malaysia, the provision of health centres in industrial areas is earmarked for immediate attention. The Government of Zambia has adopted the "supermarket approach" to providing health services, which

enables women to access different services during one visit and consequently reduces the number of visits. Kenya's goal is to rationalize drug procurement and ensure a reliable, continuous supply of high quality pharmaceutical, contraceptive and other supplies and equipment. Some plans highlight the need to have more women in leadership positions in medical professions, including research and science. Senegal addresses the problem of the constant reduction in medical personnel since structural adjustment programmes have been introduced and sets a goal to have 50 per cent of all births attended by qualified personnel. Angola will offer training and retraining for traditional birth attendants. Malaysia plans to implement a standard for traditional medicine. With regard to insurance coverage, Croatia, in its Medical Insurance Act, has envisaged, *inter alia*, the right to monetary compensation during maternity leave.

22. Many Member States consider action against sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS as a priority concern. Prevention is included in all plans focusing on health, with a focus on tuberculosis in Georgia; malaria in Senegal; cancer, HIV/AIDS and domestic violence in Honduras; and iodine deficiency among women in Georgia and Senegal.

23. Campaigns are an important means to reach out and inform people about health concerns. Maldives and Saint Lucia plan to conduct information campaigns, particularly for young people. Ghana focuses on health hazards of tobacco consumption and related risks of substance abuse and addiction of women. Zambia has started initiatives to review traditional practices and initiation ceremonies and produce general guidelines on the content of initiation ceremonies for boys and girls.

Violence against women

24. Thirteen out of 20 national action plans cover the critical area of concern of violence against women. Several plans include planned or already implemented changes to the penal codes as a way of dealing with the phenomenon of violence against women. The Government of Croatia introduced a new Penal Code in 1998 which, among other things, criminalizes trafficking in women and marital rape. In the same vein, Malaysia plans to review existing laws with the objective of removing weaknesses in the procedure, administration and implementation of those laws. Kuwait is planning to strengthen measures against the perpetrators of violence against women.

25. Several plans indicate that Governments intend to address the issue of violence against women through awareness-raising publicity campaigns with respect to gender-based violence. Ethiopia, for example, intends to make use of the mass media to sensitize the public about the causes and effects of violence against women. In Singapore, the Ministry of Community Development will work closely with voluntary welfare organizations on a public education programme to promote awareness of domestic violence.

26. Institutional responses to violence against women are proposed by many Governments. Ethiopia intends to mount regular training programmes for the police and other law enforcement officers in order to heighten their sensitivity in dealing with crimes of violence against women. Maldives proposes to create institutional mechanisms so that women and girls can report acts of violence against them in a safe and confidential environment.

27. All plans acknowledge the role of civil society, particularly non-governmental organizations, in dealing with the issue of violence against women. Malaysia plans to provide technical and financial assistance to non-governmental organizations that meet the criteria established by the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development and the Women's Affairs Division in order to enable them to provide services such as counselling centres, complaints centres for teenagers and shelters for women.

Women and armed conflict

28. Eight out of 20 national action plans deal with women and armed conflict. Several plans follow the structure of the Platform for Action closely and propose actions under all the objectives. Some plans identify specific actors, and also identify resources needed for implementation.

29. Several plans, including those of Angola and Georgia, aim at increasing women's participation in decision-making in peace-building, in peace negotiations and in conflict resolution. A reduction of military and defence spending, and reallocation of resources in favour of women's development activities, is envisaged in Angola's plan. Human rights abuses, including sexual and other types of violence against women that occur in armed conflict, will be addressed by such countries as Croatia and Georgia. Croatia will continue to focus attention on rape as a war crime in international forums, and plans to introduce within two years an international humanitarian law class in military schools with a special focus on prevention of violence against women in armed and other conflicts. The situation of refugee and displaced women, including their integration, or reintegration, in society, remains a concern. Kazakhstan, for example, will include female refugees in language and professional training programmes.

Women and the economy

30. In 12 out of 20 national action plans, women and the economy is considered a critical area of concern. Many Governments are planning actions to promote women's economic rights, including the right to equal pay for work of equal value, and the right to access economic resources. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of Croatia is planning, before the end of 1998 and in cooperation with trade unions, the publication of a brochure on the rights of women. The question of access to and control over land, which has hindered rural women from enjoying their basic economic rights, has been properly addressed in the new Constitution of Ethiopia, guaranteeing them equal rights with men.

31. Almost all Governments are focusing their actions on promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship among women. In Ghana, efforts are being made to sensitize bank managers to extending credit to women. The Second Global Trade Fair of Women Entrepreneurs will be held in Ethiopia. Many Governments are planning actions to promote and improve women's access to and conditions of employment. Senegal plans to include women's needs and interests in the National Employment Policy currently being drafted. Kazakhstan is planning to adopt affirmative action for vulnerable groups of women such as female heads of households. Some countries will promote the harmonization of work and family responsibilities. Senegal is planning actions to reduce the burden of domestic work on women and girls through the development and implementation of appropriate technologies. Ghana and Kenya will promote awareness campaigns to change attitudes. Kuwait is planning actions for the measurement of unpaid work.

32. Many Governments are planning to mainstream a gender perspective into economic policies, including by analysing the different impacts of structural adjustment programmes on women and men. Honduras is planning to integrate a gender perspective into fiscal, employment and rural development policies. Many Governments are going to implement these actions in partnership with the private sector, non-governmental organizations, trade unions and the donor community. In many cases, special groups will be targeted, including women in rural areas and in the informal sector, female heads of households, female prostitutes, working children and unemployed women.

Women in power and decision-making

33. Sixteen of the 20 national action plans refer to women in power and decision-making as a priority area. Situational analysis of most plans indicates low representation of women in the area of power and decision-making. The general consensus is that the burden of unpaid work within the family, illiteracy, lack of funds and historical unequal power relations are some of the factors preventing women from equal participation in power and decision-making. The plans also indicate that women's empowerment and representation in decision-making positions in governmental and legislative bodies contribute to redefining policies and placing issues reflecting gender mainstreaming on the agenda. Ethiopia reported that visibility has been enhanced by women's representation in parliament and appointment to previously male-dominated positions.

34. Most plans propose mechanisms for increasing awareness of women's representation in power and decision-making, education, training, collection and dissemination of data, funding, and monitoring and evaluation of strategic objectives. General measures include attempts to achieve better gender balance in appointments and elections to national and international bodies. Specific mechanisms include quotas and/or affirmative action proposals to achieve gender parity. For instance, Ghana recommends that 40 per cent of government appointment nominees at district levels of power and decision-making must be women by 2005. Most plans emphasize the need to monitor and evaluate the implementation of affirmative action and the introduction of quotas, policies and programmes to ensure equal representation.

35. Almost all plans address the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the area of power and decision-making, including through legislative actions. For example, Ethiopia indicates a proposed revision of the civil service codes and existing labour laws in order to improve the employment status of women. Most plans reiterate the importance of collection and dissemination of data for use in appointments especially in the area of power and decision-making. In Croatia, a set of data identifying women and men in public positions will be published annually.

36. In terms of capacity-building, most plans address issues relating to training, and building partnerships with non-governmental organizations and the entire civil society. Some plans acknowledge the efforts made by non-governmental organizations in raising awareness and assisting women to seek leadership positions. Zambia's plan refers to assistance by local non-governmental organizations to women during the 1996 election campaign. Zambia makes a direct reference to lack of funds as one of the factors that prevent women from seeking elective leadership positions, for example, during election campaigns. In Croatia, the Commission for Equality proposed to finance a project "Female infotheque: a study of the causes of inadequate

representation of women in political life". Ghana's plan proposed labour-saving devices for use by husbands to lessen the load on women, and the provision of special attention to women with disabilities at all levels of decision-making.

Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

37. Twelve national action plans refer to institutional mechanisms. Most national machineries were created or strengthened after the Fourth World Conference on Women and played a key role in preparing national action plans. Honduras reports that the Instituto Nacional de la Mujer was recently established. Its executive director holds the rank of minister and participates in all meetings of the Cabinet of the Government.

38. Some national action plans mention actions related to the integration of a gender perspective into legislation, public policy, programmes and projects. The Centro Mujer y Familia in Costa Rica sees the protection of women's rights and the promotion of gender equality as its priority. Some plans emphasize the importance of legislative actions to facilitate the implementation of the Platform for Action.

39. Many plans focus on actions related to training and capacity-building in general. The National Women's Machinery of Saint Lucia addresses gender equality and empowerment of women through sensitization workshops and in public, radio and television discussions. In Kenya, the Women's Ministry has been in the forefront of disseminating actions agreed upon in the Beijing Platform for Action and in sensitizing relevant target groups to gender issues affecting the advancement of women, including through gender-sensitization seminars for key decision makers in the Government, senior government officials, sectoral and district development planners, statisticians and social development officers. Incentives include awards and prizes, such as the Grand Prix of the Head of State in Senegal, which is awarded each year to a distinguished women's group. In Malaysia, the Women's Affairs Division is implementing training programmes in gender analysis for government officers involved in planning.

40. Most national action plans refer to monitoring and evaluation. Senegal will introduce a permanent mechanism to follow up on activities for the advancement of women at the central and decentralized levels and intends to conduct a mid-term evaluation of the action plan. The collection and dissemination of statistics, information and research are also referred to in many plans. Angola considers the collection and utilization of gender-disaggregated data as a strategic objective and suggests that the capacity of the National Institute of Statistics be reinforced to collect such data.

Human rights of women

41. Fourteen out of 20 national action plans cover the critical area of concern of human rights of women. Several plans identify specific actors responsible for implementing proposed actions, as well as time-frames. These include Ghana, Kazakhstan, Kenya and Senegal. Kenya also identifies actions to be implemented at the district level. Senegal's plan gives detailed budgetary requirements for the implementation of proposed actions. Zambia's plan has five priority areas for action, and incorporates the promotion of the human rights of women as a cross-cutting issue throughout these areas. Several plans mention the important role of non-governmental organizations in promoting women's enjoyment of human rights.

42. The ratification and full implementation of international human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, remains a priority in several plans. Croatia and Senegal aim at ratification of Convention No. 156 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Kazakhstan plans to ratify United Nations and ILO conventions. Costa Rica reaffirms its support for an optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its actions in this critical area of concern will be characterized by an integrated approach encompassing civil, political, economic, social, cultural and solidarity rights.

43. While many plans highlight efforts to achieve de facto equality of women, they also emphasize the continuing need for legislative and administrative reform to eliminate the inequality and discrimination that continue to exist, including in Constitutions. Kazakhstan aims at securing legislative and constitutional guarantees for equality. Croatia plans to review within two years all laws and policies concerning equality of women and men. Malaysia sees a need for a law review and repeal of discriminatory provisions, and Maldives intends to review national laws, including customary laws, and legal practices in all areas to ensure that women's rights are fully addressed. Ethiopia is undertaking an overall review of its family and penal codes to identify and change any discriminatory provisions, and is holding public discussions on proposed legislative action. Reform of the penal codes are also envisaged in Angola and Costa Rica. Senegal's plan contains very detailed proposals

for legislative reform of its family, labour, social security, land, and civil service law to bring them in line with international instruments. It also aims at developing a legislative proposal that would recognize the right of human and women's rights organizations to go to Court on behalf of women and girls.

44. The improvement of women's legal literacy, and information and education campaigns on women's human rights are the subject of several plans, including those of Georgia, Kazakhstan, Maldives and Senegal. Croatia plans to hold annual meetings of the Commission for Equality with the National Committee for Education on Human Rights to examine educational programmes with regard to their treatment of women and equality between women and men. The Sudan plans to translate all legislation dealing with women's and children's rights into local languages and dialects and simplify them for wider access.

Women and the media

45. Ten national action plans consider women and the media as a priority. Their first goal is to achieve the elimination of the stereotyped portrayal of women. Ghana, for example, intends to discontinue the projection of negative and degrading images of women in media communications — electronic, print, visual and audio. To counter pornography and the projection of violence against women and children in the media, including in advertising, Maldives will take effective measures, including appropriate legislation, and Kenya will promote professional guidelines and codes of conduct. Kenya and Malaysia also favour the establishment of media watch groups.

46. A few Governments consider the mass media a formidable means of disseminating information and encourage the production of educational materials on gender-related issues. Ghana intends to raise awareness about the Platform for Action through the media. Angola will undertake literary programmes through the mass media.

47. Member States want to increase the overall number of women working in the media, including in leadership positions. Ghana sets a goal of 50 per cent of women in all media. Kenya aims at gender balance in the appointment of women and men to all advisory, management, regulatory and monitoring bodies. In Maldives, 50 per cent of members of the National Censorship Board should be women. Malaysia suggests the inclusion of women's issues in mass communication curricula. Ghana and Kazakhstan suggest the establishment of a directory of women experts in media.

Women and the environment

48. Eight out of 20 national action plans consider the implementation of the critical area of concern of women and the environment. These plans follow the conclusions and recommendations of the Platform for Action under women and the environment. Many consider this critical area of concern in the broader context of development, underlining the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective into policies and programmes in this context, and recognizing the importance of increasing women's participation in environmental decision-making.

49. Ghana is planning to have meetings with business women on waste management. Ethiopia and Kenya are intending to expand the involvement of women's non-governmental organizations in natural resource management and environmental decision-making. Ethiopia will provide material support (such as offices, land) to women's associations. Kazakhstan is planning to establish a gender working group within the Control Agency for Strategic Resources.

50. Governments recognize the fundamental link between environmental hazards and potential risks to human health, especially women's health. In this regard, Kazakhstan, Kenya and Ethiopia are proposing to revise laws, organize public awareness campaigns and conduct advance research to protect women against environmental hazards. Kazakhstan is planning to hold a series of conferences and seminars on the issue of women and ecology as well as to create the national register of congenital and inherited diseases in ecologically unfavourable regions of the country. Ghana promises to ensure that potable water is available and accessible by 2000. Several national action plans target women in connection with access to and usage of environmentally sound technology.

The girl child

51. In 11 out of 20 national action plans and strategies the girl child is referred to as a key area of concern. Ethiopia makes a commitment to eradicate female genital mutilation and other traditional practices that are harmful to girls and women as well as to increase school enrolment and retention rates for girls. Elimination of discriminatory traditional attitudes and customary practices is considered critical in many national action plans. Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, and Zambia recognize such practices as violations of the rights of the girl child.

52. Several of the national action plans, including those of Maldives and Singapore, aim at the realization of equal opportunities for girls as well as promotion and protection of the rights of the girl child in school, the family and society through revising an existing legal provision and putting appropriate measures in action. Many plans recognize the need to increase general awareness of the needs and potential of the girl child.

53. Teenage pregnancy is a concern in a few national action plans. Kazakhstan, for instance, plans to provide sexual education for young people. Some plans include measures to be taken in order to eliminate discrimination against and violence and abuse inflicted upon young girls in employment situations.

Other priorities

54. Four of the 20 national action plans set priorities additional to the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action, including women and the family, science and technology, culture and arts, religion and sports. Malaysia sets the objective of activating non-governmental organizations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of socio-economic programmes as a goal. Under science and technology, Kenya intends to recognize and document indigenous technology used by women and acknowledge women inventors and scientists as role models. Under the strategic objective "women and family", Angola advocates the equal sharing of household responsibilities and Malaysia suggests conducting awareness programmes for husbands on their role and integrating women and development issues in parenting and pre-marriage courses. Kenya plans activities under the rubric "culture, religion, family and socialization" against customary law and training courses targeting religious leaders, decision makers and the media.

Notes

[1] A number of national action plans have been placed at the WomenWatch Web site (http://www.un.org/womenwatch/follow-up/national/natplans.htm).

[2] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[3] Angola, Belize, Costa Rica, Croatia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Ghana, Georgia, Honduras, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Malaysia, Maldives, Singapore, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Senegal, the Sudan and Zambia.

[4] Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia, Singapore, Saint Lucia and Zambia.

[5] Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Bahrain, Bolivia, China, Colombia, Cuba, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Lebanon, Mali and New Zealand.

[6] Finland, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan and New Zealand.

[7] Ecuador.